Moresnet Neutral, a Political Arcady Ended by the Peace Terms

Oddest Realm in Europe to Become Part of Belgium After a Century's Freedom From Burdens of State

By R. W. THOMPSON.

BY the edicts of peace a political Arcady established a hundred years ago in a vale of western Europe is to be blotted out. Its frontiers inscribed upon no map, owning allegiance to no ruler since Napoleon, Moresnet Neutral is to become a part of Belgium.

War's alarms had not startled the world when we found ourselves one summer day in a leafy Brussels retreat. Outside the pavilion where we sipped afternoon coffee a roadster pulsated to be off on promised adventure. But we dallied, for this fascinating conversation drifted from a neighboring table:

"A land, you say, unknown to travellers?"

"Though it borders their daily track....The error of map makers gave it birth. The greed of nations set a watch to preserve it."

"An accidental state...."

"Unique in international history. Its citizenry is without nationality. It has two flags and no flag. Sharing neither the prerogatives of a monarchy nor the privileges of a republic, it is more independent than republic or monarchy."

As the speakers rose and strolled out, the members of our party surprised each other in attitudes of curiosity. Without doubt here was a goal worthy of our tires, but which way lay the route? There were guide books under the roadster's seat, but—"Not on the map," memory taunted. "At the heart of Europe...." "Two flags...." "A hidden domain...."

Inquiry brought only a shake of puzzled heads. Tourist agencies, even the Consulate staff were dumb when we asked, "Direct us, please, to a dominion, independent, yet doubly governed; a European country of no nationality; a mystery land undiscovered by the American tourist."

On Right Trail at Last.

The Republic of San Marino was proposed and the feudal State of Andorra. Spain and France jointly administer the latter, but the Pyrenees are far from the heart of Europe. Though our "accidental state" continued to elude us, we pursued our geographical quest. At last we gained a hint from a Belgian monsieur. "It cannot be Luxembourg," he reflected, assailed by our inquiry. "And of course not the monarchy of Monaco, nor the barony of Lichtenstein. You are sure it is in Europe?" We were sure of nothing but that. "Then I fear"—He looked dubious. "Unless—" We took courage. "Somewhere I think I have read of a land your description recalls."

The name he did not know—of the direction only he was sure. To the east of Belgium it lay. We were off the next day.

Out of Brussels we jolted over a cobbled way eastward to Louvain and Tirlemont, and followed the index of sundry blue signs and ruddy fingers to St. Trond and Tongres, whose names, in a few short weeks, were to be written in blood.

On the second day we drew near to the border town of Vise, famed for its goose dinners and old cloisters, and soon to go down in history as the first Belgian town to be invaded by the Hunnish horde. It was at Vise we heard for the first time the name of the goal we sought. A Fleming charioteer with mahogany cheeks knew it well.

"But yes—it is for Moresnet that Madame inquires. Of a surety I know the way, straight over the hills of Limburg. The Neutral Moresnet is but a few kilometers beyond the shrine of Our Lady of the Little Oak. Often I have driven pilgrims there. It is, as Madame says, a territory rarely visited—a district twice ruled, and for that—ruled scarce at all."

Before the dew was off the wheat fields the next day we were speeding past farms where round cheeses, fresh and not yet malodorous, were sunning on benches against white dairy walls, and huge draught horses were dragging high two wheeled carts ponderously to and fro beneath ranks of poplar trees, straight as soldiers. By twilight we were in a valley beyond the Limburger ridge. A peasant, touching his taper to the candles of a crossways altar, turned curiously to survey the strangers asking the road to Moresnet, and indicated a blur of roofs pointed by a spire. Up hill again the engine purred among pastures spotted with resting cattle and past cottages wreathed in evening smoke. "Moresnet?" we queried of dim doorway figures, and got affirmative bobs of the head. So with confidence we climbed, our spirits mounting too. Beyond was the inn. To-night we should sleep in the oddest realm of Europe—to-morrow learn the whys of its existence.

But scarcely had the car been stabled next the landlord's cow when we heard the unwelcome truth. The hill crest village was indeed Moresnet—the Belgians' Moresnet. The Neutrality of Moresnet was yonder there in the green vale, a wedge shaped buffer between Belgium and Germany. We could not miss it if we asked the way to the town of Kelmis, in the Neutrales Gebiet.

So again we took the road and rolled down hill on a calcium path until, at the end of a "little half hour," we reached a white hotel just under the moon. It was a clean hotel; it had good beds, an arbor dining room and a most capable chef. For six contented days we claimed its hospitality while we explored the alluring pyramid of land that for a hundred years has defied all political precedent.

Moresnet's Mineral Riches.

To a faulty survey Neutral Moresnet owes its novel existence, but to its valuable deposits of zinc and pyrites is ascribed the maintenance of its individuality for ten decades. The community that grew up centuries ago about the famous mines took the name Calamine or Kelmis, which, translated from the French and the Flemish, means zinc. Title to the mining property was held by France between the years 1795 and 1914. In Napoleon's reign this valley, intersected by the road from Liege to Aix-la-Chapelle—seat of Charlemagne—was bounded by three French departments. After the Empire's fall the Congress of Vienna apportioned a part of the eastern territory of France to Prussia and Holland. Article LXVI., which defined the Dutch spoils, failed to explain that the demarking line, on reaching the upper western limit, should join the line intersecting the boundary of the French Canton of Aubel, in the Department of Ourthe. In determining the boundaries the commissioners had worked from defective charts; there was a segment comprising about fourteen hundred acres that came under dispute. Neither Holland nor Prussia would surrender the wedge to the other, as both countries coveted the Mine of the Old Mountain. Parleys effected no settlement, so a provisional arrangement was signed June 25, 1815, stipulating that the shark's tooth of mining and farm land should belong to no one at all until the matter could be adjudicated. This was the birth certificate of Moresnet Neutral.

When Belgium revolted in 1830 and separated from Holland the neutral rights of Holland in Moresnet fell to the new nation. Two commissioners of Prussia and Belgium were authorized to choose alternately a native son of the territory as executive. A municipal council was to collect taxes and disburse the funds of Kelmis, the only town in the strange little realm. Townsfolk and farmers dwelling in this taxpayer's Elysium have never paid State, inheritance or income taxes. They have paid tribute on "doors and windows," on personal property, on dogs of burden and a small church tax. The ratio per person has not varied since 1815.

"Some day," said the joint governors, "the Moresnetians will be granted the right to bequeath themselves and their fertile territory to one or the other of their foster parents." So Moresnet's neighbors have zealously wooed her favor. Over the frontier fence many a special privilege has been handed on diplomatic tray to this spoiled child of Europe.

In the beginning there were but two hundred fifty native born inhabitants to enjoy freedom from national taxes and military service. It was not long, however, before the Belgians, the Dutch and the Prussians employed in the highly productive mines moved their families across their several border lines to share the advantages of the autochtones. The mine operators were liberal. They paid good wages. They built a lyceum for the workers. Strikes and socialistic murmurs were unheard of under the government of the Old Mountain Mine.

The population increased to four thousand. But with a jealous eye on the emigrants that hoped to escape military obligation, the Powers decreed that foreign-born inhabitants should retain the nationality of their fathers, and owe to their respective countries the prescribed years in their army's service. Descendants of foreign-born inhabitants had no nationality if born on the soil of Moresnet Neutral. They could secure nationality only by becoming naturalized in some other country. If a criminal fled from Belgium or Germany into Moresnet he could not be extradited. But if a citizen of Moresnet escaped to a foreign country, both Belgium and Germany had the right to demand his return.

Important cases at law were submitted to a judge in Belgian Verviers or German Aachen (Aix-la-Chapelle), we were told. Judgment was rendered, however, not according to the laws of these countries, but according to the Code Napoleon, which was in force when Neutral Moresnet came into being, and is the law of the Neutrality to-day. The old French code omits to name offences little known in 1815, and imposes heavy punishments for certain deeds not now considered heinous. Drunkenness is not punishable in Moresnet. The failure of the code to name a punishment for gambling led to an invasion of the territory by professional gentlemen of chance in 1903 and some exciting scenes followed before they were ejected by the Belgo-Prussian suzerains.

The dissolution of Moresnet has been imminent for several years. The mines, first exploited in 1414, are dead. "They offer no longer any cause for jealousy," sighed the burgomaster, who for twenty years and more has watched over the interests of the community. "The mines are exhausted—our mines that have yielded vast amounts of minerals and brought prosperity to our domain. Literally, all justification for our continued independence has crumbled to earth." Yet the inhabitants naturally preferred that their present status be continued. If that was not to be, then they wished to become a part of Belgium, because the kingdom to the west was less exacting in the matter of taxes and military service. Years of easy going have served to sharpen the discrimination of the natives of Moresnet against burdens of State!

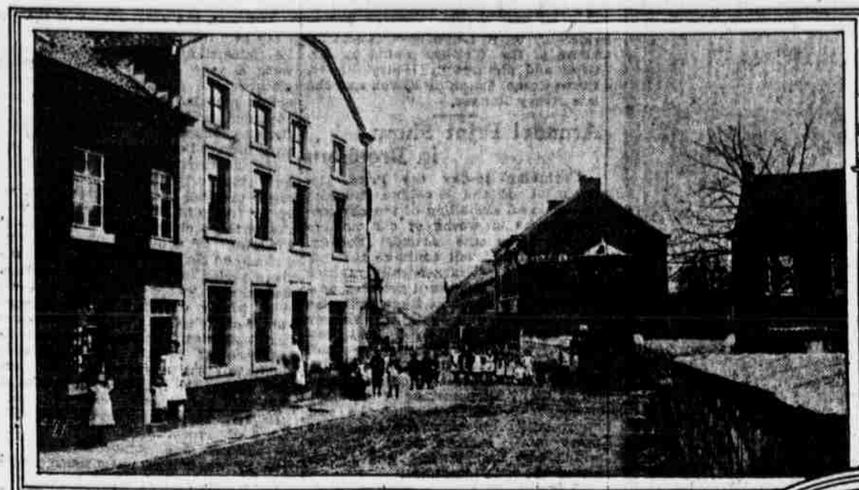
A Talk With the Mayor.

We walked with the Mayor after luncheon in his garden; we looked into cafés full of whirling Sunday dancers, and indiscriminately we invested Belgian, German and Dutch coins at the booths of the kirmesse imported from over the border. The populace saluted the head of the realm in a variety of tongues—Flemish, Walloon, Dutch, French, German and a patois composed of all five. We met a uniformed guard pacing the centre of a roadway to the east. "Behold!" said the Chief Executive, "our east frontier customs department! Like our police department, there is but one of him."

An automobile swerved around a corner on the way to the eighth century castle of Charlemagne on a German hill above our heads. We stepped from one country to another out of its path. The burgomaster looked at his watch and remarked on still another eccentric border line—"the frontier of the hours." He came two feet nearer us. "Now it is 3 o'clock. And now," moving back again, "it is 2. I am an hour east of you, since on this line the time changes."

But after six days we had lost the capacity to be surprised if Moresnet. Spending the currency of three centuries we had seen only in old lithographs the coinage of the country we were in. When we sent a letter to Brussels we affixed a red King Albert; if we mailed one to Aix-la-Chapelle it bore the double eagle—if to any other country, either King Albert or the eagle. But these oddities had become commonplace to the residents of town and outlying acres. Moresnet to its people was the kingdom of unruffled content.

A fifteen minute run through the Neutrality by way of the road to the north brought us to Four Land Point. Lighting at the top of the hill we touched with one foot the boundary stone of Germany and with the other the monument that marks the highest spot in the Netherlands. We encircled with the left arm Belgium's shaft, and with the right the pillar that stands for Moresnet—lost a century ago in the shuffle of nations, but by the terms of the peace treaty destined once more to take its place in the pack.



The MAIN STREET of KELMIS, MORESNET.

The MINE OF The OLD MOUNTAIN, KELMIS. BUT FOR THIS MINE The NEUTRALITY OF MORESNET WOULD NEVER HAVE EXISTED...

The PRESENT CHIEF EXECUTIVE OF The TERRITORY, CHOSEN A GENERATION AGO BY BELGIUM'S COMMISSIONER

ON The PRUSSIAN FRONTIER MORESNET. BEHIND IS The ONLY HOTEL IN The TERRITORY

Domain Born of Map Makers' Error Prospered While Wooed by Nations Seeking Rich Mines

Automobile Thoroughfare Proposed as Next Step in Broadway's Evolution

Association Considers Movement to Solve Traffic Problem by Eliminating "Tank" Cars in Favor of Motor Buses—A Century's Changes in Transit Systems Reviewed

BROADWAY is such an old New York institution that people have almost got out of the habit of giving it thought. Now, however, since the good old street has acquired going subways throughout its entire length and its pavements, thank goodness, have been promised longevity, the true Broadwayites are thinking about it.

Some of them have reached the conclusion that the green cars south of Forty-second street ought to be removed and surface transit returned to the bus period, with the difference that gasoline replace horses. The Broadway Association is giving attention to the proposal, which has come from many sources as a part of the "thought survey" being conducted by the association preparatory to the development of a programme of work.

This plan, it is urged, has a preponderance of evidence in its favor. In view of the fact that reports compiled by the Public Service Commission show that in the course of the last two years revenue losses for all surface lines on Broadway approximate 17 per cent, as compared with an average loss for all Manhattan surface lines of between 13 and 14 per cent., the owner of the New York city lines might almost consider this an altruistic thought. Through the resulting augmented traffic on other north and south lines, with a reduction in relative operating expenses, they might gain by the adoption of the proposal.

In the opinion of certain Broadway merchants the street should become an automobile thoroughfare. Motorists do not now choose Broadway below Times Square as a through street because of the surface cars. They would be inclined to do so, however, owing to the congestion on Fifth avenue and because of the fact that Broadway is a diagonal street and therefore the shortest line between many points if the slow moving "tank" cars were removed. Broadway is already a "no truck" street.

Broadway has always been a difficult street to satisfy in matters of transportation. It is long and its interests are varied. They are more varied than those of any other street in New York. It is not only the longest street in Manhattan, but crossing the island like the sash on a decorated banqueter it bisects every district, the financial, jobbing, manufacturing, retail, amusement and hotel and residential and educational. It has a day transportation problem and a night transit problem. Its history is that of Manhattan. Growing pains have been an affliction of Broadway for more than a century.

First Interurban Line.

It is a little more than a century since the first interurban transit line was opened on Broadway for profit. It was a stage to Harlem. In 1811 there appeared an advertisement of a stage to Greenwich Village. The first stage to make trips between Bowling Green and Bloomingdale, in the upper part of Manhattan, was put on in 1819, exactly 100 years ago. Soon stages were running to other parts of the island. A firm composed of Messrs. Kipp & Bond carried on the business. For travel in the growing town they substituted omnibuses for stages on Broadway in 1830, the route then extending from Bowling Green to Bleecker street.

The buses resembled the jitneys of to-day in one respect at least. Their entrances were on the side. This was, like the older railroad cars of Europe, an adaptation from the stage coach. Small boys combined business with pleasure by serving as fare collectors.

Those who worry about increased fares will be interested in learning that the buses of those days were something of a luxury, the fare being a shilling, or approximately twelve and one-half cents, for the journey from the Battery to Bleecker street.

They were not unlike present day ocean liners in one detail. Each bore a name. One could take his choice of making the journey in the Lady Washington, the Lady Clinton, the George Washington, the De Witt Clinton or the Benjamin Franklin.

The drivers were remarkable whips. No *cikos* of the Hungarian plains could wield a whip lash more dexterously. Great rivalry existed between the drivers, for it was the day of extremes in individualistic competition. It was a hair raising spectacle to watch the double teams of matched horses course through tangles of vehicles with the same margin of safety that jehus of to-day accept.

In the winter time the omnibuses were replaced by great sleighs drawn by four, six and eight horses. Travel in the sleighs was exciting as well as invigorating, for, in addition to the races between rival drivers, the boys used to snowball the passengers when the fancy suited them.

Kipp & Bond apparently were the McAdoos of their time. They believed that popularity was an asset. They did everything they could to deserve it, even to the staging of an occasional race. Their popularity, particularly with the theatregoers, was manifested in an unusual way when their stables were burned in 1848. A benefit performance was given in the Broadway Theatre for them.

As if it was the logical method of travel for Broadway, the stage remained longer on the street than upon any other in the city. There are people living who remember them, and they are not old either. While the car was destined to drive the bus from the streets of the city, it was not able to do so on Broadway until the '80s. Broadway did not take kindly to car lines when they were proposed in 1850. It took "Jake" Sharp more than thirty years and cost him huge sums in bribes and a term in prison to get tracks down. It is a long tale, the account of the persistence with which this promoter pursued his project.

Although he and his associates obtained a franchise in 1852 from the Board of Aldermen permitting them to lay a double track from South Ferry to Fifty-seventh street, and thereafter to continue along the Bloomingdale road to Manhattanville, it was not until June 20, 1885, that the bus disappeared from Boadway and June 21, following day, that the first street car jogged with jingling bells along the old thoroughfare to Fifty-seventh street. Broadway was the principal residential street. Its inhabitants had strong objections to the schemes of "Jake" Sharp and his fellow promoters. They had recourse to the courts.

The courts enjoined the company from building the road. The Aldermen and assistant Aldermen to the number of twoscore earned for themselves the title of "The Forty Thieves" by their persistence in granting the franchise over the veto of the Mayor, a franchise which gave the city the short end of the deal.

"The Forty Thieves" found that contempt of court was something with teeth in it. Then Commodore Vanderbilt obtained a franchise from the Alderman for the extension of his Fourth avenue surface line, the first in the city down Broadway from Union Square to the Battery. He opened up the block between Thirteenth and Fourteenth streets, and an injunction left that portion of Broadway in the condition so familiar in these later days for two years. The condition was "frightful," according to one chronicler, but those were the beginnings of the "Public be d——d" period.

Then "Jake" Sharp was able to run cars for a distance above Union Square, but the necessity of obtaining the consent of property owners below the square greatly interfered with his plans. In 1883 he succeeded in securing from the Legislature a general railroad act which permitted the Aldermen to offer the franchise of a street railway for sale at auction if they so desired.

The New York Aldermen in August, 1883, with only one dissenting vote, gave permission to lay tracks in Broadway. The Mayor vetoed the resolution. On August 30 eighteen of the Aldermen met secretly and passed the resolution granting the franchise, no notice of the meeting having been sent to the Aldermen opposed to the grant. Of course, the city got little for the franchise, for which $2,000,000 had once been offered. An injunction was sought. The Supreme Court named a commission to investigate. Subsequent information revealed that the court commission contained men interested in the project. Naturally they favored it and "Jake" Sharp got from the court what he wanted. Sharp, true to his name, did not let the grass of Bowling Green grow under his feet. Track and equipment were quickly obtained and on June 21, 1885, a horse car trundled up to Fifty-seventh street. Despite the sudden collapse of Sharp's memory regarding the drawing of checks for a half million, a State Senate investigation revealed that the franchise had been secured fraudulently through bribery of the Aldermen, only two of whom were found to be free from taint. Fines and imprisonment were the fate of the guilty ones, including Sharp.

Advent of Cable Cars.

By this time horse cars were becoming antiquated and within five years the street was torn up again for the cable. For months the tangled "in'ards" of the thoroughfare were exposed. The first cable cars were run in June, 1893. The cable was unsatisfactory and, following a breakdown in the Houston street power house on September 5, 1898, which led to a temporary return to horse cars, a system of underground electric traction was adopted. Work began exactly five years after the installation of the cable system. For more than two years the street surface was in a disturbed state. On May 26, 1901, the first electric cars ran on the badly mauled street.

Now came the subway and once more Broadway was "kicked aroun'," this time at the upper end. Then it was called upon to suffer once again when the Brooklyn subway was bored out. And latterly it has been afflicted with Hedley's "tanks."

The Broadway Association has under consideration the proposal of merchants to replace the surface cars with buses and make Broadway an automobile thoroughfare. It is discovering the need for other things for Broadway, such as better through transit connections from Kingsbridge to points south of Forty-second street.

The association will start out with an expansion of its membership in order that it may unite all interests represented along Broadway from the Battery to Kingsbridge. Hundreds of representative men will take part in the campaign which is to be conducted from May 24 to May 29.

A RARE PICTURE of BROADWAY TAKEN WHEN IT WAS A HORSE-CAR STREET.

"Haircut"

WHEN do you have your hair cut?

If you are an average man you choose a bright, cheerful day. You have no rule to follow and it is unconscious, but nevertheless you do avoid a barber when it rains or is foggy.

"How's business?" asked a customer of the venerable head barber in a big downtown shop.

"Bad," he replied, as he glanced out of the window at the drizzle. "It always falls off in unpleasant weather—perhaps a third."

"Why?"

"Well, I don't know for sure. You'd think men would have a system about such things, wouldn't you? A shave every day and a haircut every other Saturday, say. But no. Rain hurts business considerably. I think men put on an old suit, a raincoat and a slouch hat in bad weather and don't care how they look. Not until they sprinkle up on a fine morning do they notice their heads are untidy."

"Funny," said the customer. "I must be the exception. I've been waiting a week for a rainy day to come in here. I hate to waste an hour of sunshine in a barber shop when I might be out of doors."

New Use for Breweries

A BIG problem confronting the breweries is the utilization of the plants, equipment and labor heretofore employed for the production of beer. Many breweries are considering and some have begun the manufacture of maltose sugar sirup, which requires but little additional equipment and which utilizes barley, one of the principal materials used in the making of beer.

Maltose is a sugar which in addition to being sweet has a pleasant flavor and otherwise resembles cane sugar. It can be used to advantage in numerous food products. The breweries being already equipped with much of the machinery necessary for the manufacture of maltose, and as their employees are acquainted with most of the processes, the conversion of the maltose from the starch in barley, corn, &c., is a simple matter.

Maltose propaganda on anything like a large scale was begun by experts of the United States Department of Agriculture when the sugar shortage became acute eighteen months ago. They recommend its use, in the sirup form, in soft drinks, in ice cream and confections, in bread making and as a table sirup. Recently brewers have been making pilgrimages to Washington to consult the experts of the Department both on matters of converting plants and of outlets for the product.

The breweries have heretofore used in beer making about 70,000,000 bushels of barley annually, more than one-fourth of the crop. The maltose industry, when developed, is likely to furnish a market for an equal quantity.